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S. S. LAURIE

Professor Laurie, M. A., LL. D., F. R. S. S., who fills with such lustre the chair of the theory, history, and art of education in the university of his native city of Edinburgh is like many other distinguished Scotsmen the son of a minister—the late Rev. James Laurie. As a student at the university which he now adorns as one of the ablest of its professorial staff he had a distinguished career especially in classics and classical literature. After graduating he travelled abroad as tutor for four or five years returning to Scotland in 1855 when he was appointed secretary and visitor of schools to the Church of Scotland Education Committee. For nine and thirty years he has been the adviser and the guide of the national church in all matters educational. As he received this appointment at the early age of 25, there were many at the time who doubted the wisdom of the church in choosing so young a man to so responsible and arduous a post. For there was then no talk of the Education Act of 1872, and the church was mainly responsible for education in a large number of the parishes of Scotland. He threw himself into this work with energy. The time of his appointment was one of transition: the old régime had served its day and was passing away: in the transition many difficult questions had to be solved. The Act of 1872 caused the transference of schools from the control of the churches to that of the school boards, and henceforth the special work of the church in educational matters became centred in the training colleges. These colleges are situated in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Aberdeen and have been under his general superintendence although he had not to discharge any teaching duties in them. Professor Laurie added to his duties in 1856, the administration of the Dick Bequest, an endowment specially devoted to promoting



advanced instruction in the secondary schools of Aberdeen, Banff, and Moray. As the annual visitor of the schools he was able to extend his practical acquaintance with education. In 1869, he was invited to report on the principal hospitals and endowed residential schools in Edinburgh and his reports and recommendations paved the way for the large reforms made in these institutions which are now the chief secondary schools of Edinburgh. In 1876 he was appointed by the government secretary to the Endowed Schools Royal Commission and prepared the reports and the recommendations which are now given effect to throughout Scotland. In 1876 he was appointed professor of the first university chair founded for giving instruction in the theory, history, and art of education. Professor Laurie's opportunities of studying the subject of education have been unique.

As a university teacher, he has been eminently successful. He has the faculty not so common in teaching as might be desired of making his subject interesting even to the dullest of his class. In prelections he does not soar over the heads of the majority of his class and busy himself simply with the able. His aim is rather to touch the intelligence of his class as a whole; to give each and all of his students living interest in the subject of discussion. There is little of the "dominie" about him in his dealing with the future "dominies", he aims rather at the investigation of educational principles and methods than at the inculcation of ascertained educational facts. His object is not to impart results but to quicken thought on the part of his students and if a student leaves the class of education without discovering that he has a soul and the power to think it must be because he has neither the one nor the other. There are few indeed of his students who have not while listening to his clear and vigorous lectures felt something of that magnetic influence which draws the scholar into living touch with the teacher. No one who has enjoyed the privilege of listening to his lectures will forget the flash of the eye, the genial countenance, and the kindly tone and humorous allusions of their whilom professor of education. He has built up the chair and it will probably be the model of all future erections of a similar kind in Great Britain. Professor Laurie's activity has been thrown in two lines separate yet closely connected—the practical or educational and the speculative. Notwithstanding the

constant pressure of educational work, he has yet been able to make the most original contributions of recent times to speculative philosophy. Under the *nom-de-guerre* of "Scotus Novanticus" he has given to the world a philosophy which has been characterized as "the production of an original and profound thinker, whose argument is managed with skill and dialectic power." Also a subsequent volume entitled "Ethica or the Ethics of Reason" and an earlier work "Notes on British Theories of Morals". In the educational field, his "Life and Writings of John Amos Comenius" is a book to which teachers will invariably turn for reliable information concerning the first modern methodologist in the art of teaching. His "Mediæval Education and Rise and Constitution of Universities" is well known as a contribution to our knowledge of what has been done and what may be done by our university system. Among the works which have given to Professor Laurie a world-wide reputation as an educationist may be mentioned his "Language and Linguistic Method", "Occasional Addresses on Educational Subjects", "The Training of the Teacher and Other Educational Papers", "Primary Instruction in Relation to Education", "Teachers' Guild Addresses", and the "Institutes of Education Comprising an Introduction to Rational Psychology".

It is not in his class room so much as in his home at Duddingston, a beautiful spot some two or three miles from Edinburgh, that the professor is seen to the greatest advantage. There, far from the city's din, he enjoys the sweet retirement so congenial to the philosophic mood, and there, too, he dispenses a large and liberal hospitality, for his world wide fame attracts to his pleasant home on the slopes of Arthur's Seat all visitors to our metropolis who are interested in the cause of education. For all such, whatever be their nationality or creed, the professor has a kindly welcome. Seated in his library with his well loved books around him and enveloped in a cloud of tobacco smoke—for our professor, like all "men of meditation", has faith in the virtues of the soothing weed—he will entertain his visitors with pleasant and instructive conversation. It is under such circumstances that strangers will find him to be what his intimate friends know him to be—a profound thinker, a reverent inquirer, and a generous and warm-hearted man.